

U.S., Canada Hockey Joint Issue

On October 20 in Detroit, Mich., the USPS will release a pair of Hockey History stamps, pictured here, in a souvenir sheet whose illustration was not available at press time. This is a joint issue with Canada, whose stamps also are illustrated here, but because of a deal Canada Post has with the National Hockey League—and because of its more progressive rules—Canada Post's NHL issues are much more exciting than the minimalist USPS issues.

One example, the 2017 Canada Post NHL issue also is shown here. Notice that the Legends pictured include three who are still alive: Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux and Bobby Orr.

The USPS has issued previous ice hockey stamps, all of them generic issues that do not depict a living person other than a model that might have been used, but was not identified by the USPS or on the stamps. Most of those issues were released around the time of Winter Olympic Games, with or without the Olympic Rings, depending on whether the Postal People were able to work a reasonable deal with the sometimes unreasonable International Olympic Committee.

One stamp that is missing is an issue commemorating the "Miracle on Ice" in which a team of young U.S. amateurs defeated the powerful Soviet Union in a medal round [semi-final] game on the way to winning Olympic Gold.

In 1999, *Sports Illustrated* named the "Miracle on Ice" the top sports moment of the 20th century, and as part of its centennial celebration in 2008, the International Ice Hockey Federation named it as the best international ice hockey story of the past 100 years.

Despite these accolades, the Postal People missed another great opportunity to publicize and sell its issues because of archaic rules that do not allow for the honoring of living Americans on U.S. stamps.

In any event, here's the gist of announcement for the October 20 "History of Hockey" stamps:

Postmaster General and CEO Megan Brennan will be joined by Canada Post President and CEO Deepak Chopra at Detroit's Little Caesars Arena Belfor Training Center.

"The Postal Service is honored to partner with Canada Post to produce The History of Hockey stamps," said Brennan. "This sport exemplifies a wonderful tradition of competition and camaraderie between our nations, and these commemorative stamps are a special way to celebrate the game that transcends borders."

The souvenir sheet, which will be revealed during the October 20 dedication ceremony, features a scene that illustrates the evolution of the sport across generations. The selvage depicts a father teaching his daughter how to play hockey on a pond.

One player is wearing a contemporary uniform and using modern equipment, and the other is wearing vintage garb and using old-fashioned equipment. The two vertically stacked stamps in the souvenir sheet, which are arranged to mirror each other, are identical to those sold also as a pane of 20.



Designed by Subplot Design Inc., for Canada Post, the artwork on the stamp and stamps is intended to celebrate and reflect on the history of hockey. KC Armstrong of Toronto, ON, shot the photographs. Susan Gilson was the art director of the Canadian version of the stamps. William J. Gicker was the art director of the American version of the stamps.

In the 1800s, the sport truly began to take shape in Eastern Canada. By the late 19th century, the game had grown popular in the United States. American Malcolm Greene Chace became interested in the game and assembled a group of players from various universities. In 1896, a team from Yale, which included Chace, faced Johns Hopkins University in the first college hockey game. Soon, professional leagues formed in North America. And today, women's hockey is thriving. The National Hockey Association began play in 1910 and evolved into the National Hockey League in 1917. In 1924 the Boston Bruins became the first American team to join the National Hockey League.

Canada Post's announcement includes references to previous Joint Issues with the U.S.:

Canada Post and the United States Postal Service celebrate the countries' shared love of hockey, a game firmly rooted in the lore of both nations.

This is the sixth joint issue for Canada Post and the USPS dating back to 1959, and the first in more than a decade. It's also their first celebrating a sport.

"The subjects chosen for joint issues highlight how much our nations have in common, and the love of hockey is one of those things," says Deepak

Chopra. "Hockey has captured the imagination of millions in both countries. It stirs a passion that for many borders on obsession, and these stamps celebrate the pure love of the game."

Almost 1.2 million people in Canada and the United States are registered in minor and adult hockey leagues, and millions more play recreationally on outdoor rinks and ponds. Both countries have men's and women's national teams that have medalled at the Olympics and World Championships, and there are more than 100 professional or semi-professional teams in North America, including in the premier National Hockey League, which has expanded successfully into the American sunbelt.

On an open pond, a player in modern equipment reflects, literally, on the past. Mirrored in the ice beneath him is a player in vintage gear.

The first joint issue released by the two postal administrations marked the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Since then, they have jointly commemorated the United States Bicentennial (1976), the 50th anniversary of the Peace Bridge (1977), the St. Lawrence Seaway's 25th anniversary (1984) and the 400th anniversary of Samuel de Champlain's exploration of the east coast of North America (2006).

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